

PAUSE AND THINK,
AM I A CHRISTIAN ?

BY : REV. JOSEPH ALLEINE.

EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED, YE SHALL NOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—MATT. 18 : 3.

DEAR READER—As you may not understand properly what conversion is, I will first endeavor, by the help and blessing of God, to show you its *nature*. As it may be your case, that you expect mercy and favor with God, though you continue in your natural state, I would next prove the *necessity* of conversion ; and lest you should make a most dangerous and destructive mistake, and imagine that you are converted when you are not, I would also lay before you the *marks of the unconverted*. But lest you should fear no harm, because you see none, and so con-

tinue satisfied in your present condition, I would show you the *misery of the unconverted*. To stir you up to seek the conversion of your heart, I would offer you some *motives* to it. And lastly, if you are convinced of your need of conversion, and are become anxious for it, I would direct you to some *means in order to your obtaining it*, and therewith your present and eternal salvation.

I. I would show you the *NATURE of conversion*, both what it *is not*, and what it *is*.

Your *profession of Christianity* is not conversion. St. Paul says, it lies not in word, but in power. 1 Cor. 4 : 20. There were persons in Sardis and Laodicea that were Christians by profession, and had a name to live ; yet because they had but a name, they were condemned by Christ.

Your *baptism* is not a conversion. Many a person has been baptized, and yet been destitute of holiness. Wicked Ananias and Sapphira had both been baptized, and yet were both suddenly struck dead in their sins. Simon Magus was baptized, and yet continued in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. Where Christianity

is the professed religion of any country, very many who are called by the name of Christ, have only the name, and not the disposition of Christ.

A good education is not conversion. Education may render you decent in your behavior, but cannot change your heart. Joash appeared very devout while his uncle Jehoiada lived, but after his good tutor was taken out of the way, he soon showed what spirit he was of, by his suddenly giving way to idolatry.

A strict performance of all the outward duties of religion, and a diligent attendance upon all the means of grace, is not conversion. Paul, even when he was unconverted, could say that he lived after the strictest sect, and in all good conscience, and that touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. The Pharisees in general were so remarkably strict in outward things, that it passed for a common proverb among the Jews, that if but two persons went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee : and yet our Lord, instead of commanding them, said unto them, *Woe, woe, woe unto you.*

A turning from immorality and profaneness to sobriety and regularity, is not conversion.

Lead may be cast into many different shapes, and yet it remains but a base metal still. And so men may be greatly changed, and be reformed from all gross outward acts of sin, and escape the pollutions of the world, and yet be unrenewed in their hearts. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly, and honored him, and did many things ; and yet rested short of conversion.

Deep convictions of sin, and sharp and sore pangs of conscience, if the person go no farther, are not conversion. Pharaoh, Ahab, Felix, and Simon Magus, and even Judas, were under great terrors of conscience. These distresses often come to nothing, and prove only so many foretastes of hell.

Strong movings of the affections under the powerful preaching of the word, or under some peculiar dispensations of Providence, may not end in conversion. There may be very strong desires after good things, and likewise great delight in them, even in the unconverted, as was the case with those of whom the Lord said, *They seek me early, and delight to know my ways, and take delight in approaching to God.* Isa. 58 : 2. And there may be great flashes of joy, as in the case of the hearers our Lord speaks

of, who received the word with joy, but had no root in themselves, and so in time of tribulation and persecution withered away.

As you would not be deceived in a matter of the greatest importance, examine what you ground your hopes of heaven and salvation upon.

Is it your profession of Christianity—your baptism—your religious education—your sobriety—your diligence in your business—your justice and honesty in your dealings—your performance of religious duties—or the trouble of mind you have sometimes had for your sins? I do assure you, from the word of the Lord, these pleas will not be accepted at God's bar. All these, however good, will not prove that you are converted, and so will not be sufficient to your salvation.

But if those who can say thus much of themselves come short of conversion, what must be the case of the open, outward sinner? If you, alas! are such a one, you are to know that you are far, very far from the kingdom of God.

May one be strictly moral, and yet not be converted? where then shall the outwardly ungodly and the gross sinner

appear? May a man keep company with the wise virgins, and yet be shut out? and shall not a companion of fools, that is, of sinners, much more be destroyed? May a man be true and just in all his dealings towards his fellow-creatures, and yet not be justified before God? what then will become of you? Oh, bethink yourself of turning to the Lord speedily and thoroughly, or else iniquity will be your ruin. Seek to the Saviour for his pardoning and renewing grace, and rest not until God has made a thorough change in you; for you must be another man, a new man in Christ, or else you will be a lost man for ever.

But I am now to show you positively what is conversion.

It is a universal change in your heart, and also in your life. It goes throughout a man, throughout his mind, and his whole conduct. The old man is put off, the new man is put on, and all things are become new.

1. In conversion *the understanding is enlightened*, so that he who was sometime darkness is become light in the Lord. He is enlightened with the knowledge of God. His spotless purity, his perfect hatred and

abhorrence of sin, his infinite justice to punish it, his infinite knowledge and power and goodness, his all-sufficiency, and his other glorious perfections, as revealed in the word, are powerfully perceived in his mind. Now he sees what he only heard of before.

His understanding is also enlightened into the knowledge of *sin*. Now the sinner sees it, in some measure in its proper colors, as the worst of evils, exceeding sinful, though he could see but little evil in it before. Oh, what deformed monsters do his formerly beloved lusts appear. If they were right eyes, he would pluck them out ; or if they were right hands, he would consent to their being cut off. He sees the unreasonableness, the unrighteousness, and the abominableness there is in sin, how odious and offensive it is to God, and how hurtful and destructive to his own soul ; so that he is affrighted at it, loathes it, flees from it, and looks upon himself as the greatest fool for fighting so long against the Lord, and harboring such a destroyer in his breast.

His understanding is illuminated with the knowledge of *himself*. The prodigal is now come to himself, and is made, as it

were, full of eyes within ; sees that his inward parts are very wickedness, and knows and feels the plague of his own heart. He sees how desperately corrupt his fallen nature is, what enmity against the holy God and his holy law has lodged there all his life ; so that he abhors himself. He that could see little sin before in himself, and could find no matter of confession before God, except some few gross evils, now sees the deep and universal corruption of his whole soul, feels that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ; and he is made to cry out, “Unclean, unclean ! O Lord, wash me thoroughly from my sin, and create in me a clean heart.” He writes *unclean* upon all his performances ; he sees the blasphemy, and the theft, and murder and adultery, that are in his heart, of which before he was ignorant. Though he saw no danger before, he now concludes himself lost for ever, unless renewed by the power of grace.

Farther, his understanding is enlightened with the knowledge of *Christ*. Heretofore he saw no form nor comeliness in Christ, nor any beauty in him, that he should desire him ; but now he

discovers a superlative worth, and a transcendent glory and excellency in the Lord Jesus Christ, which darkens all created excellencies, as the rising sun makes the stars to hide their heads ; he sees an infinite fulness in him, sufficient for the supply of all his wants, enough to satisfy the boundless desires of his immortal soul, and this makes him determined to believe in Christ and him alone, as his portion for ever.

Now, my dear reader, examine yourself here ; try your own heart. Is your understanding thus enlightened? Are you made acquainted with the things I have been speaking of?

2. In conversion *the will is renewed and brought into subjection to the will of God.* It is cured of its utter *disinclination* to do any thing good. A fixed aversion to evil, and an inclination and propensity to do good, is implanted in it. Now, the man has new ends and designs ; owns his intention is to glorify God in all things. He chooses Jesus as his Lord ; and his choice is not merely a choice made in a fright, as with a dying sinner, that only would believe in Christ rather than go to hell, when he does not really hate sin, nor wish to be

delivered from it. Again, he takes the ways of holiness for his path. He takes God's testimonies, not as his bondage, but his heritage, his heritage for ever. He not only bears, but takes up with pleasure Christ's yoke. No time passes so agreeably, as that which he spends in the exercises of religion.

Now put your conscience to this, my friend, as you go on, whether you really are thus renewed. You are truly a happy person if this be your case ; but see that you are faithful in examining yourself.

3. In conversion *the exercise of the affections is changed.* The convert's great desire is not after riches, but grace. He hungers and thirsts after it ; he had rather be gracious than great ; he had rather be the holiest man upon earth, than the most learned, the most famous, and the most prosperous. Once, perhaps, he was ready to say, "Oh ! if I was but in great esteem, if I rolled in wealth, and swam in pleasure, if my debts were paid, and I and mine provided for, then I should be a happy man." But now his language is altered. "Oh !" says he, "If I were but a real Christian, though poor and despised, I should reckon myself a happy man."

Reader, is this the language of your heart ? The converted man rejoices in the way of God's testimonies more than in all manner of riches. He delights in the law of the Lord, for which he once had no relish. He has no such joy now, as in the thoughts of Christ, and in the company of his people.

His *cares* are altered. They were before chiefly about the world ; nor would he allow the least time for the concerns of his soul ; but now his cry is, "What must I do to be saved ?"

His *fears* are different. Once he was afraid of nothing so much as suffering the loss of his earthly goods, or the esteem of the world and of his friends ; nothing seemed so terrible to him as pain, poverty, or disgrace. But now, in his view, these are not to be compared with the dishonor of God, or his displeasure. He walks circumspectly and cautiously, lest he should be overtaken with sin. It fills his heart with grief to think of losing God's favor : this he dreads as his only undoing. No thought in the world pains him so much, as to think of parting with Christ. Reader, is your will determinately fixed for God in Christ ; and are your affections agreeable

to that choice ?

The change wrought upon a man in conversion has an effect upon *all his powers*. These, that were before the instruments of sin, are now become the instruments of righteousness. He who before abused his *body*, now possesseth his vessel in sanctification and honor, in temperance, chastity, and sobriety, and dedicateth it to the Lord alone.

Conversion has an effect upon a man's *whole life and practice*. He takes a new course. His conversation is in heaven. When once God has given him a new heart, and written his law upon his mind, immediately he walks in his statutes, and keeps his judgment. Though sin may dwell in him, yet it has no more the dominion over him. He has his fruit unto holiness, he has an unfeigned respect to all God's commandments, and makes conscience of what some may think little sins and little duties. And now, my dear reader, examine well your own heart and life, and ask your own conscience, whether, while I have been representing the nature of conversion, I have been describing your case, and your experience, or not.

As I have not the least hope of seeing your face in heaven, unless you are converted here on earth, see Matt. 18 : 3, and as there is very great danger of your resting satisfied in your natural state, and expecting mercy and favor with God, without being altogether changed and renewed by his grace and Spirit, I proceed to prove,

II. *The absolute NECESSITY of conversion.*

1. Without this your *existence is a blank* ; for you cannot answer the end of your being. Did not God make you, body and soul, entirely for his service ? But without conversion you live to no purpose, yea, rather to a very bad purpose ; all your powers and faculties are so entirely corrupted by the fall, that except you are purified from dead works, you cannot serve the living God. An unsanctified person cannot possibly work the work of God ; for he has no skill in it, and no inclination at all to it. Without conversion you live to a very bad purpose : the un-renewed soul is “a cage of unclean birds,” “a sepulchre” full of corruption. All your members and powers are instruments of unrighteousness, and the servants of Satan. You are dishonoring God, and

fighting against him continually. Oh ! awful abuse of God’s workmanship.

2. Without conversion, your *religious duties and performances will be all of them utterly in vain* ; for they can neither please God nor save your soul.

3. *Your hopes are all in vain.* Your hopes of any solid comfort here—for you may as well expect ease when all your bones are out of joint, as true happiness while you are in your sins. And your hopes of salvation hereafter are vain. Perhaps you are ready to say, “I hope in Christ ; I put my whole trust in God, and therefore I doubt not but I shall be saved.” But to hope to get to heaven without being born again, is to hope that Christ will prove a false teacher. John 3 : 3. David’s plea was, “I hope in thy word ;” but your hope is against the word. You cannot show me any word of Christ to give you hope of heaven, while you go on still in your wickedness. God rejects such hope with abhorrence. Isaiah 48 : 1, 2. You will ask, “Would you have me then despair ?” Yes : you ought absolutely to reject all hope of getting to heaven in an unconverted state. You must despair of ever being happy

without being holy. But you must by no means despair of finding mercy, if you repent and turn to God; neither must you despair of obtaining repentance and conversion, if you receive Christ as God hath appointed in his word.

4. Without conversion, *all that Christ hath done will be to you in vain*, John 13:8; Titus 2:14; it will not avail to your salvation. Without the application of the Spirit in regeneration, you can have no interest in the benefits of Christ's redemption. To suppose you might, would overturn his designs, which are, that men should be brought through sanctification to salvation. Christ will save none in a way contrary to his Father's will; and this is the will of God, even our sanctification. 1 Thess. 4:3.

5. To save you in your sins would *oppose the attributes of God*.

(1.) His *justice*; for the righteousness of God's judgment consists in rendering to all according to their work. But if men were to sow to the flesh, and yet reap everlasting life, where would be the glory of God's justice; since it would be giving to the wicked according to the work of the

righteous?

(2.) His *holiness*. If God should not only save sinners, but save them in their sins, his holiness would be defaced. It would be offering violence to the infinite purity of his nature to have such to dwell with him. If David would not endure such in his house nor in his sight, Psalm 101:3-7, can you think that God will endure such in his presence?

(3.) His *truth*; for God hath declared from heaven, that if any shall say, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, the Lord will not spare him, but his anger and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." God further declares, that he who shall "ascend into his hill, must be of clean hands and a pure heart." How could God be true, then, if, notwithstanding all this, he should take men to heaven without conversion?

(4.) His *wisdom*; for this would be to throw away the greatest of his mercies upon those that would not value them. The unsanctified sinner puts very little price upon God's great salvation. And it

would not be at all consistent with God's infinite wisdom to force spiritual blessings upon those that would not be exceedingly thankful for them. It would also be a reflection upon his wisdom, as sinners are not prepared to receive his mercy. The wisdom of God is seen in suiting things to each other, the means to the end, and the quality of the gift to the capacity of the receiver.

Now, if Christ should take an unconverted person to heaven, he could not possibly, in the very nature of things, be in the least degree happy there. If the entertainments of the heavenly world consisted in those things in which sinners delight here ; if its enjoyments were earthly riches, pleasures, and honors ; if its employments were the amusements of this present life ; then they might have some sort of delight there, though still no real, solid happiness ; but these things have no place in heaven. The felicity of that state consists in the contemplation of God's perfections, and the displays of them in the works of creation, of providence, and especially of redemption. Hence, it is described by "seeing the Lord ;" as a state of knowledge, of complacency in God,

and in perpetually serving and praising him. Hence, adoration is generally mentioned as the employment of the host of heaven. These are the entertainments of the future world, and those who cannot find supreme happiness in these, cannot find it in heaven.

But these things could afford no true satisfaction to an unholy person : a holy God would be an object of horror, rather than delight to him ; and his service a weariness, as it is now. If *now* your conversation is on earth, and not in heaven—if *now* you are living in the enjoyment of the pleasures of sense—if *now* you are serving foolish and hurtful lusts, instead of presenting your body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God—if *now* you are seeking happiness in the vanities of time—if *now* you disrelish and avoid the company of God's people—if *now* earthly, sensual tempers reign in you, instead of the pure, holy, heavenly dispositions of the true Christian ; you may be assured there is no entrance for you into the blissful presence of God ; you are under an absolute incapacity of drawing near to him ; you can have no idea of

the happiness of real Christians ; you can be no more sensible of it, than the blind to the beauties of sight, or the deaf to the pleasures of harmony.

5. The admission of unconverted sinners into heaven would be contrary to God's *omniscience, omnipotence, immutability* ; it is the determination of heaven, that none but "the pure in heart shall see God." Matt. 5 : 8. Now, if Christ were to take the unconverted to heaven, he must do it without God's knowledge—where would then be his omniscience ? Or against his will—where would then be his omnipotence ? Or else he must change his will—and then where would be his immutability ? O, how vain and foolish, how unreasonable and absurd, how wicked and blasphemous, then, is your hope of going to heaven without being regenerated and converted here on earth !

6. For Christ to save you in your sins, would be against his *word*. He who is truth itself hath declared, "Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18 : 3. And again, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish." Luke 13 : 3. One would think that a single word from Christ should be enough, but

how often and how earnestly does he repeat it ! "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." John 3 : 3, 5, 7. And will you yet hold fast your vain hope, and your presumptuous confidence, directly against Christ's own words ?

But he must not only go quite against the law of his kingdom to save you in this state, but against his *oath*. He hath sworn that those that continue ignorant and unbelieving, impenitent and disobedient, shall not enter into his rest. Heb. 3 : 18. The covenant of grace is confirmed by an oath, and sealed by blood. Heb. 6 : 17 ; Matt. 26 : 28. But all must be made void, if you be saved, living and dying un-sanctified.

God will certainly show *his hatred of sin, at the same time that he shows his mercy to the penitent sinner*. Therefore, he that rightly nameth the name of Christ, departs from iniquity, and denies all ungodliness ; and he that hopes for life through Christ, purifies himself, even as he is pure : otherwise Christ would be thought a favorer of

sin. But he will make all men know that though he pardons sin, he will not cherish it.

But it would be also against *all the offices which Christ sustains in the economy of salvation* : God hath exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins ; and he would act against both if he were to save men in their sins. It is the office of a Prince or a King, to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well. He is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Now, if Christ were to favor the ungodly, continuing so, and take those to *reign with him* that would not that he should *reign over them*, this would be quite against his office. What king would take rebels in a state of open hostility into his court ? And as Christ would not be a Prince, so neither would he be a Saviour, if he were to do this ; for his salvation is divine : he is called "Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins :" so that if he were to save them in their sins, he would neither be a King nor a Saviour.

Oh, then, what meanest thou, O sleeper ? Arise, call upon God, that thou

perish not. Awake, O secure sinner, lest you be consumed in your iniquities. Say as the lepers, "If we sit here, we die." Verily, it is not more certain that you are now out of hell, than that you will very soon be in it, except you repent and be converted. You must either turn, or perish. How wilful will your destruction be, if you should yet harden yourself in your sinful state ! If you are a man, and not a senseless creature, stand still and consider whither you are going. If you have the reason and understanding of a human being, dare not run into the flames of hell with your eyes open, but bethink yourself, and seek to the Lord for repentance. What, a man, and yet go wilfully into the pit, when beasts must be forced into danger ! What, endowed with reason, and yet trifle with death, and hell, and the vengeance of the Almighty ! Will you not hasten to escape from everlasting torments ? Let reason prevail with you. Is it a reasonable thing to contend with the infinitely great God, to harden yourself against his word ? Is it reasonable for the potsherds of the earth to strive with their Maker ? Reader, will you sit still, till the tide of God's wrath come upon you, and

drown you in the ocean of everlasting misery ? Is it good for you to try whether God will be true to his word, and harden your heart, in vain conceit that all will be well with you, while you remain unsanctified ? O, distracted sinners ! What will they do in the day of visitation ? and to whom will they flee for help ? Isaiah 10 : 3. How powerfully hath sin bewitched them ! How effectually hath the god of this world blinded them ! How strong is the delusion ! How obdurate their hearts ! Sometimes I think the mercies of God will melt them, and his winning invitations will overcome them ; but I leave them as they were : sometimes, that the terrors of the Lord will prevail on them ; yet neither will these do the work. O Lord God, send help from above. For thy mercy's sake, and for thy dear Son's sake, have compassion on the souls of those that read these lines, and save them from everlasting burnings.

Lest you should make a most dangerous and destructive mistake, and imagine that you are converted, when you are not, I would now lay before you,

III. *The MARKS of the unconverted.*

St. Paul gives us a dreadful calendar of sinners, to which I beseech you to attend with all diligence : "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Eph. 5 : 5, 6. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone ; which is the second death." Revelation 21 : 8. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10. There are other unconverted, unholy persons, that do not carry their marks thus openly in their foreheads, but secretly in their hands. These often deceive themselves

and others, and pass for Christians and good people, when they are still unsound at heart. And many pass undiscovered, till death and judgment bring all to light. Remember, my friend, many perish by some sin, that is not only hid from others, but even from themselves, owing to their not observing their own hearts. *Some of the secret sins, by which persons are ruined, are these that follow :*

1. *Ignorance* is one of these sins. Oh, how very many doth this sin kill in the dark ! while they think they have good hearts, and are in the way to heaven. Whatever excuses you may make for your ignorance, know that it is a soul-ruining evil. The God of truth declares that some, who called themselves his people, "were destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4 : 6. "For it is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor." Isaiah 27 : 11. Beware that this be not your case, and no longer make excuses for your ignorance.

2. *Secret reserves in giving the heart to Christ.* Some will do much, but they will

not be entirely devoted to him. They must have some sweet sin ; they have secret exceptions, for life, or liberty, or possessions.

3. *Formality.* Many rest in the outside of religion, in the external performance of duties ; and this often most effectually deceives them, and more certainly ruins them, than open wickedness ; as it was in the Pharisees' case. They hear, they fast, they pray, they give alms, and therefore will not believe but their state is good. Luke 18 : 11, 12. Whereas, resting in these outward things, and coming short of the power of religion, all their flattering hopes and confident persuasions of being in the way to heaven will fail them after death. Matt. 7 : 22,23. O dreadful case, when a man's religion shall serve only to harden him, and effectually to deceive his soul.

4. *Self-righteousness.* When persons trust in their own righteousness, they thereby reject Jesus for their Saviour. O, my dear friend, you had need be very watchful here, for not only your sins, but a dependence upon your duties may ruin you : for your trusting in your fancied righteousness to satisfy God's infinite

justice, and thus obtain pardon, is putting Christ out of his office, and making a saviour of your own duties and performances.

5. *The reigning love of the world* is a sure evidence of an unconverted heart. Mark 10 : 22 ; John 2 : 15. This sin often lurks under a fair covert of forward profession. Such a power of deceit is there in it, that oftentimes, when every one else can see the man's worldly-mindedness, he sees it not himself ; but has so many excuses and pretences for his eagerness after the world, that he blinds his own eyes, and perishes in his self-deceit.

6. *Resentment against those who are thought to have injured them.* Too many, that would wish to be esteemed religious, bear malice in their hearts, and return evil for evil, directly against the rule of the Gospel, the pattern of Christ, and the nature of God. Such persons are in the gall of bitterness, and a state of misery.

Reader, doth nothing of this touch you ? Oh, search and search again ; take your heart solemnly to task. Woe is from God against you, if you be found under the power of wilful ignorance, resting in formality, trusting in yourself, drowned in

worldly-mindedness, or envenomed with malice : if either of these is your case, you are verily an unconverted person.

7. *Pride.* If you love the praise of men more than the praise of God, it is certain that you are yet in your sins. If you have never seen and groaned under the pride of your heart, you are a rebel against God, instead of being converted to him. This sin reigns in the hearts of many that know it not, and are utter strangers to themselves. John 9 : 40.

8. *The prevailing love of pleasure.* 2 Tim. 3 : 4. The person that liveth in pleasure is dead to God while he liveth, saith the Lord. This therefore is a very black mark. If you will give the flesh its liberty, if you will pamper and please it, instead of denying and restraining it ; if your delight is in gratifying your senses, whatever appearance you may have of religion, you serve not the Lord Jesus, but are certainly an unconverted person. Rom. 16 : 18 ; Rom. 8 : 8. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, and are careful to keep it under as their enemy. Gal. 5 : 24.

Carnal security, or a presumptuous hope that you are in a safe state already, is very dangerous. Many cry peace and

safety, when destruction is coming suddenly upon them. Many are willing, and even resolved upon the slightest grounds, to cherish in themselves a hope that their condition is good, and therefore do not seek for any change, and so perish in their sins. Are you at peace ? Upon what grounds ? Is it a Scripture peace ? Do you bear upon your soul, in your temper, in your conversation, and your course of life, the distinguishing marks of a true believer ? If not, fear this peace more than any trouble ; and know, that a carnal peace does generally prove the most mortal enemy of the soul.

And now, conscience, do thine office. Speak out, and speak home to him that heareth or readeth these lines. If thou findest any of these marks upon him, thou must pronounce him utterly unclean, utterly unholy. Take not a lie into thy mouth, speak not peace to him, to whom God speaketh no peace. Let not lust bribe thee, let not self-love nor carnal prejudice blind thee. Is the man converted, or is he not ? Does he allow himself in any way of sin, or does he not ? Does he truly love, and prize, and please, and delight in God above all things, or

not ? Has he been thoroughly convinced of sin, been taken off from all dependence on himself, and brought off from his sins to give himself up entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ ? Or dost thou find him to this day under the power of ignorance, or in the mire of profaneness, or a stranger to prayer, a stranger to God, a neglecter of the word, and a lover of this present world ? Dost thou find his heart fermented with malice, or burning with lust, or going after his covetousness ? Then set him aside ; his portion is not with the saints ; he must be born again, he must be converted, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, or else he cannot enter heaven.

So unspeakably dreadful is the case of every unconverted soul, that it might well be thought, if one could but get men convinced that they are yet unregenerate, the work were done. But such a spirit of sloth and slumber possesses the unsanctified, that though they are convinced that they are unconverted, yet they are still careless, and, through worldly cares and business, or through sensual pleasures, corrupt lusts, and inordinate affections,

the voice of conscience is drowned, and sinners go no farther than some cold wishes and general purposes of repenting and amending. I would therefore endeavor to show you,

IV. *The MISERY of an unconverted state.*

1. *The infinite God is against you* while you are unregenerate and unrenewed. And, believe it, it will be found a most dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when his wrath is justly incensed against you. There is no friend like God, and there is no enemy like God. As much as heaven is above the earth, so much more dreadful will it be to fall into the hands of the living, angry God, than into any earthly trouble. God himself will ere long be your tormentor ; your destruction shall come from the presence of the Lord. Tophet, the place of punishment, is deep and large ; the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; and the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it. Isaiah 30 : 33. And if God be against you, who shall be for you ? If a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat, for him ? 1 Sam. 2 : 25. Sinner, does it not go like a dagger to thine heart, to hear that God is thine enemy ? Oh, whither wilt thou go ?

Where wilt thou shelter thyself ? There is no hope for thee, unless thou layest down thy weapons, and suest for pardon, and gettest Christ to stand thy friend, and make thy peace. Mercy and salvation are now offered to you through him. But if thou wilt not forsake thy sins, and turn thoroughly unto the Lord, the wrath of God abideth on thee, and he proclaims himself to be against thee by Ezekiel : “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, am against thee.”

2. *All his attributes are against thee.* His justice is like a flaming sword unsheathed against thee. “If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine adversaries, and will reward them that hate me ; I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.” Deut. 32 : 41, 42. Divine justice is very strict ; it must have satisfaction to the utmost farthing ; it denounces indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil. It curses “every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Gal. 3 : 10. The justice of God to the unpardoned sinner, that hath a sense of his misery, is more terrible than

the sight of the judge and bench to the robber, or of the irons and gibbet to the guilty murderer. When infinite Justice sits upon life or death, O what dreadful work does it make with the wretched sinner ! “Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Matt. 22 : 13. “Depart from me, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.” Matt. 25 : 41. Think of it—by this severe justice thou must be tried ; and as the Lord God liveth, this killing sentence thou shalt hear denounced against thyself, unless thou be speedily converted, and born again.

The power of the infinitely great God is against thee. The glory of his power will be displayed in the wonderful “destruction of them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel.” 2 Thess. 1 : 8, 9. He will make his power known in them, by the greatness of the sufferings he will inflict upon them. Rom. 9 : 22. It were better thou hadst all the world up in arms against thee, than to have the almighty power of God engaged against thee. There is no escaping his hands, no breaking his prison. The thunder of his power who can understand ! Unhappy man that shall

understand it by feeling it ! “If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.” “He is mighty in strength.” “Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered ?” And wilt thou rise in opposition to such an almighty enemy ? O consider this, “ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.” Psalm 50 : 22. “Woe to him that striveth with his Maker.” Isaiah 45 : 9.

Know, O sinner, to thy terror, that all the attributes of the infinite God are bound together, as in an oath, to destroy thee. Heb. 3 : 18. And what wilt thou do ? Whither wilt thou flee ? If the all-seeing God can find thee out, thou shalt not escape. If the true and faithful God will save his oath, thou must perish ; and if the almighty God hath power to torment thee, thou shalt be perfectly miserable both in body and soul, to all eternity, unless thou dost turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

The guilt of all your sins lies like a mountain upon you. You feel it not, yet this it is which seals your misery upon you. However light you may make of sin now, you will one day find that the guilt of un-

pardoned sin is an intolerably heavy burden. Oh ! what work did it make with the God-man Christ Jesus. It pressed the very blood out of his veins, and made his heart in the midst of his body even like melting wax. And if it did this in the green tree, in the holy and innocent Saviour, what will it do in the dry, in you, a sinful, guilty rebel against God, who are like dry stubble, fit fuel for the devouring fire ? Oh, consider your case in time. Can you think of that threat without trembling, "Ye shall die in your sins ?" John 8 : 21. Oh, it were better for you to die in a jail, or a dungeon, than to die in your sins. If death, as it will certainly take away all your comforts, would but take away all your sins too, it would be a great relief. But your sins will all follow you, when all your friends leave you, and all your worldly enjoyments are taken from you. Your sins will not die with you, as a prisoner's other debts will ; but they will all go to judgment with you, there to be your accusers ; and they will all go to hell with you, there to be your tormentors. Oh, look over your debts in time, then ; how much you are in the books of every one of God's commandments ; how every

one of his holy laws is ready to arrest you. Consider, then, what will you do, when they shall altogether fall upon you ? Hold open the eyes of your conscience to think deeply of this, until you despair of yourself, and are driven to Christ, and made to fly for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you.

Your raging lusts do miserably enslave you. While you are unconverted you are the very servant of sin ; it reigns over you, and holds you under its dominion, till you are brought within the bonds of God's covenant. Now, there is no tyrant so cruel as sin. Would it not pierce a man's heart, to see a number of poor creatures drudging and toiling, and all to carry faggots and fuel for their own burning ?

Yet this is the employment of the drudges of sin. Even when they bless themselves in their unrighteous gains ; while they sing and swell in pleasures, they are but treasuring up wrath and vengeance for themselves, and, as it were, casting in oil, to make the flame rage the more fiercely. Who would serve such a master, whose work is drudgery, and whose wages is death and destruction ? Rom. 6 : 23.

Though *conscience* is now asleep, yet when death and judgment shall bring you to your right senses, then you will feel the raging smart and anguish of every wound. The convinced sinner is a sensible instance of the miserable bondage of sin. Conscience flies upon him, and tells him what the end of these things will be, and yet such a slave is he to his lusts, that he still goes on headlong, with his eyes open, till he falls into infinite and everlasting destruction. What thinkest thou, O man, O woman, of being in hell to all eternity? "Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee, saith the Lord of hosts?" Canst thou dwell with the devouring fire? when thy whole body and soul shall be as perfectly possessed by God's burning vengeance, as the fiery sparkling iron when heated in the fiercest forge? Thou art even crushed and ready to wish thyself dead, under the weight of his finger; how then wilt thou bear the weight of his almighty arm? How wilt thou endure, when immortality shall be thy misery, and to die the death of a brute, and be swallowed up in the gulf of annihilation, would be such a happiness as a whole

eternity of wishes and an ocean of tears shall never purchase?

Now thou canst put off the evil day, and canst laugh and be merry, and forget the terrors of the Lord; but how wilt thou endure when God shall cast thee into torments, and make thee lie down in endless sorrow? In a word, when "the smoke of thy torments shall ascend up for ever and ever," and thou shalt have no rest, day nor night, no peace in thy conscience, no ease in thy bones; but thou shalt be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach for evermore. O, sinner! stop immediately, and consider this dreadful condition. Do not blind thine own eyes; do not wilfully deceive thyself; see thy deplorable misery, while thou mayest prevent it; think what it is to be a vessel of wrath, into which the Lord will be pouring out his tormenting fury while he has a being.

And is this true indeed? Is this thy misery? Yes, it is as true as that there is a God. It is better to open thine eyes and see it now, while thou mayest remedy it, than to blind and harden thyself, till, to thy eternal sorrow, thou shalt feel what thou wouldst not believe. And since it is

true, dost thou mean to loiter and linger in such a case as this ? O let me knock up, and awaken this sleeper. Who dwells within the walls of this flesh ? Is there a soul here, a rational understanding ? Art thou a reasonable soul, and yet so far brutified as to forget thyself to be immortal, and fancy thyself to be as the beasts that perish ? O unhappy soul, that wast the glory of man, the companion of angels, and the image of God ; that wast God's representative in the world, and hadst the supremacy among all the creatures upon earth, and the dominion over thy Maker's works here ! Art thou now become a slave to sense, a servant to so base an idol as thine appetites, for no higher felicity than to heap together a little earth, no more suitable to thy spiritual, immortal nature, than sticks and dirt ? O, why dost thou not think where thou shalt be for ever ? Death is at hand, the Judge is even at the door. Yet a very little while, and time shall be no longer. And wilt thou run the hazard of continuing in such a state, in which if thou shouldst be overtaken, thou wilt be irrecoverably miserable ?

Arise at once and take thy flight ; there is but one door, that thou mayest flee by, and that is the strait door of conversion. Unless thou dost unfeignedly turn from all thy sins, and come unto Jesus Christ, and take him for thy Prophet, Priest, and King, and walk in him in holiness and newness of life, as the Lord liveth, it is not more certain that thou art now out of hell, than that thou shalt without fail be in it, but a few days or nights hence. O do not, then, contend with God. Repent and be converted, so none of this shall come upon thee. "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55 : 6, 7.

Although what has been already said of the necessity of conversion, and of the miseries of the unconverted, might be thought sufficient to induce any considerate person to resolve upon immediately returning to God, yet knowing that the heart of fallen man is deceitful

above all things, and desperately wicked, I find it necessary to add thereto,

V. Some farther MOTIVES *to conversion.*

The God that made you, does most graciously invite you. His most kind and merciful *nature* encourages you to come to him. He is full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy. Psalm 86 : 15. This is a great argument to persuade sinners to return : "Turn to the Lord your God ; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." His encouraging *calls and promises* do invite you. Oh, what an earnest suitor is mercy to you ? How lovingly does it call after you ! "Return, backsliding sinner, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever, only acknowledge thine iniquity. Turn, O backsliding soul, and I will heal your backslidings." O melting, gracious words ! And is not your heart broken by them ? O that to-day you would hear and obey his voice !

It is to be added for your encouragement, If you will now return to the Lord, he will immediately settle unspeakable

privileges upon you. He will redeem you from the power of all your most inveterate sins, from the power of the devil, and deliver you from this present evil world. Prosperity shall not hurt you, and adversity shall work for your good. He will in due time redeem you from the power of the grave, and make the king of terrors a messenger of peace to you. He will save you from the arrest of the law, and turn the curse into a blessing to you. He will not only deliver you from misery, but bestow upon you the richest blessings. He will bestow himself upon you ; he will be a friend and a father unto you ; he will be a sun and a shield : in a word, he will be a God unto you. And what can be said more ? As to your body, he will withhold from you no manner of thing that is good, that is necessary and expedient for you. And as to your soul, he will pardon your sins, accept your person and services, hear and answer your prayers, give you a title to glory, and make you meet for it by his grace and Spirit.

VI. If you are now made sensible of your need of conversion, and are become anxious for it, I conclude all with adding

some DIRECTIONS in order to your obtaining it.

1. *Get a proper sense of your sins.* Till you are weary and heavy laden, and sick of sin, you will not come to Christ for ease and cure. Meditate, then, upon the number of your sins. David's heart failed him when he thought of this. Look backward : where was ever the place, when was ever the time, in which you have not sinned ? Look inward : what part or power can you find, in body or soul, but what is poisoned with sin ? What duty did you ever perform which was not corrupted with iniquity ? O how great is the number of your sins ! For your soul's sake, my friend, no longer make light of sin ; O study the nature of sin, till your heart is inclined to fear and loathe it. Meditate on the aggravations of your particular sins, how you have sinned against all God's warnings, and corrections, and mercies ; against all your own prayers and promises, and resolutions, and vows, and covenants of duty and obedience. Charge your heart home with these things, till it blushes for shame, and you no longer think well of yourself.

Meditate on what your sin deserves. It cries to heaven for vengeance against you.

Its due wages is death. It brings the curse of God upon your soul and body. The least sinful word or thought lays you under the infinite wrath of the Almighty God. O then what a load of wrath, what a weight of curses, what a horrible store of vengeance have all the millions of your sins deserved ? Above all sins, fix your mind upon the sin of your nature. Study how deep, how lasting, how universal your original pollution is. It is this which makes you backward to all good, and prone to all evil. This hath brought blindness and pride, prejudice and unbelief, into your heart ; enmity, inconstancy, and obstinacy into your will ; disorder and irregularity into your affections ; and insensibility and unfaithfulness into your conscience : in a word, this has put every power of your soul out of order, and has made it, instead of a habitation of holiness, a very sink of iniquity. This has defiled and perverted all your members, and turned them into instruments of unrighteousness and servants of sin. And will you any longer talk of your good heart ? O never leave meditating on the desperate contagion of your original corruption, till with the

deepest shame and sorrow you smite upon your breast, and with Job, abhor yourself, and repent in dust and ashes.

2. *Strive to affect your heart with a deep sense of your present misery.* Remember when you lie down, for aught you know, you may awake in torments ; and remember when you rise up, that perhaps before the next night you may make your bed in hell. And are you willing to continue in such a fearful case ? to stand tottering upon the brink of the bottomless pit, and to live at the mercy of every accident and disease that may send you into everlasting misery ? Suppose you saw a condemned person hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's burning fiery furnace by nothing but a thread, which was ready to break every moment, would not your heart tremble for him ? Thou art the man. This is your very case, if you are yet unconverted. And what if the thread of your life should break—and you know not but it may the next night, or the next moment—where would you be then ? whither would you drop ? O study, then, your misery, till your heart cries out for Christ, as earnestly as ever a drowning man did for help, or a wounded man for a surgeon.

3. *Settle it deeply in your mind, that you cannot possibly recover yourself.* Think not that your praying, reading, hearing, confessing, or even amending, will work the cure. You must indeed attend upon these, but if you depend on them you will perish. You are lost and ruined for ever if you continue hoping to escape by any other than Christ, who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

4. In the strength of the Lord *immediately renounce all your sins.* If you will yield yourself to the practice of any sin, you will be undone. It is in vain that you hope for salvation from Christ, except you depart from iniquity. Forsake your sins, or else you cannot possibly find mercy. Prov. 28 : 13. Give up the traitor, or you can have no peace with God. Keep not Delilah on your lap ; you must either part with your sins, or with your soul ; spare but one sin, and God will not spare you. Never make excuses ; your sins must die, or you must die for them. If you allow of one sin, though but a little, a secret one ; though you plead necessity, and have many excuses for it ; the life of your soul must go for the life of that sin—and will it not be dearly bought ?

5. *Receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as your Prophet, Priest, and King, as proposed to you in the Gospel. O my friend, you have by sin destroyed yourself, but Jesus is able, and willing, and ready, even now to help you. He freely offers to save you. I testify unto you therefore this day, that if you perish, it is not because there was not a Saviour provided for you, nor salvation offered to you, but because, like the Jews, you preferred a murderer before your Saviour, and your lusts before the Lord Jesus Christ. Though your sins be ever so many, and ever so great, and of ever so long continuance, yet if you do not wretchedly neglect the offer of God now made to you, you shall be pardoned, you shall be saved; for the mouth of the Lord God hath spoken it. If you perish, it is because you would not come to Christ for salvation.*

But Oh, for your soul's sake, be wise at length, and be prevailed on to accept him as your All, your Saviour from sin and from misery. In the name of the Lord, and in the strength of his Spirit, renouncing all confidence in the flesh, yield yourself up to him unreservedly; solemnly join yourself unto the Lord in covenant to

be wholly his, and glorify him in your body, and in your spirit, which are his; so shall it be well with you in time, and well with you to all eternity, through the same Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour. Amen and Amen.

Originally Published By
THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY



Reprinted by:
VENTURE Publications &
OLD PATHS BAPTIST PRESS
Under Authority of
Bright Light Baptist Church
Contact : pastor@oldpathsbaptist.org